

ABSTRACT

Research Paper: Patterns of Identity: Analyzing the Promotional Language of University Profiles

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DEGREE: Masters of Arts

COLLEGE: Sciences and Humanities

DATE: July 2018

PAGES: 71

In recent years, discourse analysts have noticed and produced literature on the marketization of the non-academic register in informational literature such as pamphlets and student prospectuses published by institutions of higher-learning. This study researches the patterns of discourse found on Goodwall. Goodwall is a pre-professional social network that functions much like LinkedIn, except that instead of connecting adults with jobs, Goodwall's primary function is to connect universities and students. Through building a corpus of 36 universities with Goodwall profiles across Indiana, performing a discourse analysis of the commonalities and differences among several types of universities became viable.

This study separates universities into three binaries: large/small, private/public, regional/flagship. The assumption is that Indiana's diversity of samples from each of these categories will yield results that can assist in determining patterns in the discourse produced by universities of specific categories, which can then be used to make larger inferences about what phrasing, for instance, a small regional university such as Indiana University South Bend will use to promote itself, as opposed to a large flagship university like Indiana University in Bloomington will do the same.

The corpus prepared for this study is text based, and has been coded for several different topics that had a high frequency of reoccurring within the text section of Goodwall profiles. Each profile has under 300 words of text. The profiles had been found to post external validation from third parties, list or describe their services and offerings, describe their location or institution, offer historical information, and make references to size. Once their variables had been established, all of the texts were coded for the ratio of each of the variables' presence. The goal of coding this data was to answer establish which types of universities discussed services

more, and of those describing services, and which discussed intangible services or offerings, as opposed to tangible services or offerings.

In addition, it was sought to know which types of universities will delegate more space to historical information, as well as how would universities of different sizes emphasize largeness and smallness in their wording. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data found that public universities allot more words on services, private universities have a larger amount of historical information, and that both large and small universities have a higher representation of large tokens in their discourse as opposed to tokens denoting smallness. In summary, identities and disparate discursive techniques from different types of universities on Goodwall are confirmed to be predictable.